

designed to meet the victim's ongoing expenses for medical care, living, and family support. Structured settlements are voluntary agreements reached between the parties that are negotiated by counsel and tailored to meet the specific medical and living needs of the victim and his or her family, often with the aid of economic experts. This process may be overseen by the court, particularly in minor's cases. Often, the structured settlement payment stream is for the rest of the victim's life to ensure that future medical expenses and the family's basic living needs will be met and that the victim will not outlive his or her compensation.

I now find that all of this careful planning and long-term financial security for the victim and his or her family can be unraveled in an instant by a factoring company offering quick cash at a steep discount. What happens next month or next year when the lump sum from the factoring company is gone, and the stream of payments for future financial support is no longer coming in? These structured settlement factoring transactions place the injured victim in the very predicament that the structured settlement was intended to avoid.

Court records show that across the country factoring companies are buying up future structured settlement payments from persons who are quadriplegic, paraplegic, have traumatic brain injuries or other grave injuries. That is why the National Spinal Cord Injury Association and the American Association of Persons With Disabilities (AAPD) actively support the legislation we are introducing today. The National Spinal Cord Injury Association stated in a recent letter to Chairman ROTH of the Finance Committee that the Spinal Cord Injury Association is "deeply concerned about the emergence of companies that purchase payments intended for disabled persons at drastic discount. This strikes at the heart of the security Congress intended when it created structured settlements."

As a long-time supporter of structured settlements and an architect of the Congressional policy embodied in the structured settlement tax rules, I cannot stand by as this structured settlement factoring problem continues to mushroom across the country, leaving injured victims without financial means for the future and forcing the injured victims onto the social safety net—precisely the result that we were seeking to avoid when we enacted the structured settlement tax rules.

Accordingly, I am pleased to join with Senator CHAFEE in introducing the Structured Settlement Protection Act. The legislation would impose a substantial penalty tax on a factoring company that purchases structured settlement payments from an injured victim. There is ample precedent throughout the Internal Revenue Code, such as the tax-exempt organization

area, for the use of penalties to discourage transactions that undermine existing provisions of the Code. I would stress that this is a penalty, not a tax increase—the factoring company only pays the penalty if it undertakes the factoring transaction that Congress is seeking to discourage because the transaction thwarts a clear Congressional policy. Under the Act, the imposition of the penalty would be subject to an exception for court-approved hardship cases to protect the limited instances of true hardship of the victim.

I urge my colleagues that the time to act is now, to stem as quickly as possible these harsh consequences that structured settlement factoring transactions visit upon seriously-injured victims and their families.●

#### TRIBUTE IN HONOR OF NATIONAL 4-H WEEK

● Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I rise today as a former 4-Her to pay tribute to the participants and volunteers of 4-H, in honor of National 4-H Week, which takes place October 4-10.

Although it is not known exactly when or where the 4-H program began, Minnesota was one of its originators. The 4-H program, initially known as the Boys and Girls Clubs, was founded sometime around the turn of the Twentieth Century by representatives of a wide range of community interests; specifically, farm families, agricultural scientists, school teachers, administrators and concerned citizens. The instrumental founder of 4-H in Minnesota was Theodore A. "Dad" Erickson, a Douglas County School Superintendent.

During its formative years, a three-leaf clover was used as the symbol of the Boys and Girls Clubs representing three "H's": head, heart and hands. In 1924, Mr. O.H. Benson used the four-leaf clover symbol in Iowa; in his design the fourth leaf represents health. Today, 4-H emphasizes projects that improve the four "H's": head, heart, hands, and health.

4-H evolved from an organization which first focussed on advancing agricultural technology for young men and home economics skills for young women, into a program which helped develop self-confidence and a sense of community responsibility for all youth participants. Today, 4-Hers not only continue to be involved in vegetable gardening, bread baking and sewing, which have been around since the program's inception, but have branched out into new areas to keep in tune with today's ever-changing world, such as computer, bicycle and electrical projects. Ultimately, 4-H continues to expand upon its primary goal: the development of young people.

Nationwide, there are 6,009,997 members between the ages of five and twenty-one and 624,967 volunteers who participate in the 4-H program. As for Minnesota, 4-H is the largest youth or-

ganization in the state and consists of over 250,000 members and 14,000 volunteers. In addition, there are more than 4,000 4-H clubs in the state of Minnesota.

There are many activities that 4-Hers and their clubs undertake, such as cleaning up trash in their communities, helping in literacy projects, and delivering food to hospice patients. 4-Hers participate in local county and state fairs, showing off months of hard work by presenting vegetables they have grown in their gardens, various shop projects they have built or refurbished, and recipes they have perfected. They also show various animals ranging from domestic pets to livestock they have trained and groomed for competition. 4-Hers have the opportunity to attend various camps, state 4-H youth gatherings, national 4-H Congress, national 4-H Conference, and International 4-H youth exchange.

Mr. President, 4-H would not work without the commitment from America's youth and the dedication of the volunteers who continue to make 4-H an ever-expanding success on a local, state, national and global level. Again, as a former 4-H member, I believe 4-H provides our youth of today the skills necessary to survive in our evolving world. I commend all of those involved for their hard work, service, and their pledge to honor to follow the 4-H motto: "To make the best better!"●

#### ONE GUN A MONTH FORUM

● Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, on September 2, I convened a forum on gun trafficking. Across America, it is simply too easy for criminals, particularly gangs, to purchase and distribute large numbers of guns. And more guns in the wrong hands means more murder and mayhem on our streets.

Because we must move more aggressively to stop this deadly crime, I introduced S. 466, the Anti-Gun Trafficking Act. The testimony I heard at the forum has made me even more determined to pass this sensible legislation and help stop gun traffickers.

In order to share the insights of the witnesses at the forum with my colleagues and the public, I am submitting the testimony presented for inclusion in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. Last week, I submitted the testimony of Mayor Edward Rendell. Today, I am submitting the testimony of James and Sarah Brady. Through their tireless efforts with The Center to Prevent Handgun Violence and Handgun Control, they have helped reduce gun violence across our country and it was an honor to have them at the forum.

I am also submitting the testimony from several young people who were kind enough to testify at the forum. John Schuler, Kenisha Green and Quanita Favorite live in communities where gun violence is an everyday occurrence, and they have experienced the pain and misery that results. We must do more to help them and the